

ancient capital, and even then he made all possible haste to quit it. But whereas Diocletian had travelled thither with the intention of abdicating immediately afterwards, Constantine had no such act of self-abnegation in his mind. Yet he was in no festival mood. Not long after his arrival, there took place the ancient ceremony known as the Procession of the Knights, who rode to the Capitol to pay their vows to Jupiter —the religious ceremony which attended the annual revision of the equestrian lists. Constantine contemptuously stayed within his palace on the day and disdained to watch the Knights ride by. His absence was made the pretext for some street rioting, which, we can hardly doubt, had been carefully engineered beforehand. Rome, still overwhelmingly pagan in its sympathies, had doubtless heard with bitter anger how the Emperor, the head of the old national religion, had been taking part in a General Council of the Christian Church, had admitted bishops and confessors to the intimacy of his table, and had boldly declared himself the champion of Christianity. Constantine's pointed refusal to countenance a time-honoured ceremony which, while itself of no extraordinary importance, might yet be taken as typical of the ancient order of things, would easily serve as pretext for a hostile demonstration. Demonstrations in Rome no longer menaced the throne now that the barracks of the Praetorians were empty, but the incident would serve to confirm the suspicions already clouding the mind of the Emperor.

We can read those suspicions most plainly in an edict which he had issued at Nicomedia a few months